DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 037 168 HE 001 388

AUTHOR	Hassler, William W.
TITLE	Results of Pass-Fail Questionnaire Sent to Graduate Deans.
INSTITUTION	Indiana Univ. of Pennsylvania.
PUB DATE	69
NOTE	4p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.30
DESCRIPTORS	*Admission (School), College Deans, *Grading, *Graduate Study, *Higher Education, *Pass Fail Grading, Student Evaluation

ABSTRACT

A questionnaire on the pass-fail grading system was sent to the 276 deans whose institutions belong to the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States. Of the 230 deans who responded, 214 preferred to evaluate a student for admission to graduate or professional study on the basis of a letter graded transcript, 7 preferred a pass-fail transcript. To a question asking whether they would tend to accept for admission to graduate or professional study a student with good recommendations and who had received a "pass" for every course he had completed under a pass-fail system, 121 answered yes and 69 answered no. To the question asking whether, in the above situation they would require additional evaluation to reach a decision, 202 answered yes and 11 no. One of the basic reasons given for the overwhelming preference for the letter graded transcript was that it allowed greater ease and accuracy in evaluating the student. (AF)

ED037168

RESULTS OF PASS-FAIL QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO GRADUATE DEANS

William W. Hassler
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana, Pennsylvania
[1969]

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

HE 001 388

Corres.
1/10/69
3/10/69

[redacted] PASS-FAIL QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire on the pass-fail grading system was sent to the 276 deans of The Council of Graduate Schools in the United States. The replies of the 230 respondents are tabulated and the comments summarized after each question.

Question One: Would you prefer to evaluate a student for admission to graduate or professional study on the basis of:

214 a letter graded transcript
7 a Pass-Fail transcript

Comments:

Although one graduate dean is convinced that a pass-fail system is "inevitable", the vast majority shared the contrary opinion of another who stated: "I do not foresee the pass-fail system being generally accepted in graduate schools." The latter opinion was bulwarked by the following observations:

"Letter grades are the best indicator of success in graduate school."
"The undergraduate grade-point average is still the most important reference point when considering a student for admission to graduate school."
"Evaluation requires information."
"Graduate study is for superior students; how is a superior student identified on a pass-fail system?"
"Our Graduate School requires a 2.500 average (on a 4.000 scale). This would be hard to evaluate on a pass-fail transcript."
"In the selection of fellowship recipients, a highly competitive situation, the applicant with no grade-point average might be at a disadvantage."

One practical consideration in favor of the letter-graded transcript is the vastly greater ease in evaluating them compared to pass-fail transcripts which are "too difficult to evaluate." One dean emphasized that "the grade-point average is the best single measure of potential for graduate school. I would consider able applicants with the letter-graded transcript first, the 'pass' second if spaces remained." Two respondents proposed modified pass-fail systems which would comprise three grading categories. One preferred high pass, low pass and fail grades while the other suggested pass, fail and outstanding.

Question Two: Would you tend to accept for admission to graduate or professional study a student with good recommendations and who had received a "Pass" for every course he had completed under a Pass-Fail System? 121 Yes 69 No

Comments:

Although a pronounced majority of graduate deans would tend to accept students with good recommendations who had received a "pass" for every course completed under a pass-fail system, a number noted that this would pose some vexing problems. The first of these is the reliability of recommendations. Some deans noted that the recommendations would have to be "extraordinary" or "excellent." Others consider recommendations to be "notoriously unreliable" while still others credited only those submitted by the chairman and professors in the student's major field. One factor on which all agreed was the importance of the academic stature of the applicant's school. Several deans indicated they would admit students with pass-fail transcripts on a "conditional", "probational" or "provisional" basis. One indicated he would not consider such applicants for competitive forms of financial aid. Most significantly, some stated that they would give pass-fail applicants less consideration than those with letter transcripts. One dean bluntly stated: "I think that more evaluation would be required (for pass-fail transcripts) and that people would not be inclined to do the extra work if other applications are available, which are always present in quantity anyway."

Question Two on the questionnaire was predicated on the basis that the entire transcript contained only pass-fail grades. Many deans commented that they would have no objections to pass-fail grades for electives in non-major courses.

Question Three: If a student applying for admission to graduate or professional school submitted a Pass-Fail transcript plus recommendations, would you require additional evaluation (e.g. G.R.E.) to reach a decison? 202 Yes 11 No

Comments:

In general, the respondents indicated that the use of pass-fail transcripts would force them to lean more heavily upon the Graduate Record Examination to evaluate applicants for admission. Three even indicated that they would base admissions entirely on the G.R.E.

"Additional correspondence would be indicated and sometimes there is not time for that."

"A grade of 'pass' would need substantial supporting evidence. We don't use pass-fail transcripts--we would not accept a person with such a transcript without reliable additional information: G.R.E.'s--class standing--properly informative letters of recommendation."

****

William W. Hassler
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana, Pennsylvania 15701